

## Your monthly overview from the Iowa Department of Public Health



# FOCUS

Aug./Sept. 2007

## Lt. Gov., IDPH gather input at town hall meetings

By Jessica Torneten\*

Nearly 500 Iowans across the state made their voices heard on health topics during a series of town hall meetings in July and August. Led by Lt. Governor Patty Judge's [Commission on Wellness and Healthy Living](#), the meetings were designed to begin a state-wide conversation centered on new and innovative ways to improve the health of Iowans.

"For years we have heard about growing risks to our state's health – like childhood obesity and rising numbers of people suffering from chronic illnesses," Judge said. "These issues impact the lives of nearly every Iowan, but they are preventable. As a former nurse, I know the best way to improve the health of Iowans and avoid the suffering of thousands of people is to promote healthier lifestyles and better living."

### Eight of 10 meetings already well-received

A total of 10 gatherings – two for each congressional district – were held. To lead the meetings, Lt. Gov. Judge has appointed one commissioner per district. An average of 45 community members, leaders, and



*Jane Schadle talks with a health care provider from Mahaska County and the director of a local extension agency following a town hall meeting in Atlantic.*

public health professionals attended each forum to talk about issues such as healthy living, wellness, prevention of illness and health promotion.

### Director Newton listens to community members

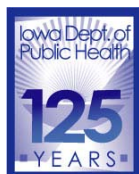
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) Director Tom Newton attended a number of the meetings and gathered important information about local resources and barriers to wellness from community members.

"Every community brings something unique to each town hall meeting," Newton said. "Although many of the issues and concerns are consistent

### Now a bimonthly publication, *Focus* launches reader survey

*Beginning with this issue, Iowa Health Focus will now be published bimonthly. So that this newsletter may best serve the needs of its readers, please click [here](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/focus.asp) to take a short survey. You can also find a link to the survey at [www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/focus.asp](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/focus.asp). The*

*survey will be available until September 14. Thank you.*



Iowa Department of Public Health

Advancing Health Through the Generations

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# Commission begins collecting information for health care reform

By Lynh Patterson\*

It's one of the hottest issues on the national agenda and now it's hot in Iowa, too. The issue: health care reform.

While the pace usually slows down for legislators during the summer, a group of them are keeping busy participating on the [Commission on Affordable Health Care Plans for Small Businesses and Families](#).

"When health insurance is so costly that employers or individuals can't afford it, health conditions tend worsen, causing much higher health care costs in the long run," said Iowa Department of Public Health Director, Tom Newton. "As for people who have insurance, it's important to note that every year since 1999, employer-sponsored health insurance premium costs have risen at rates that far exceed increases in workers' earnings. A major focus of the commission is to make affordable health care a reality."

## Commission members' backgrounds varied

The commission was established in the 2007 legislative session [HF 909, Section 127] to review and make recommendations regarding health care for Iowans. The commission will submit a report to the General Assembly by December 2007 that may include recommendations for new legislation.

Twenty-seven members serve on the commission, including legislators and representatives from various health, insurance and business groups. The Iowa Departments of Elder Affairs, Human Services, and Public Health, and the Iowa Insurance Division are non-voting members. The College of Public Health at the University of Iowa is also playing an important



*Iowa Medical Society Representative, Dr. Timothy Kresowik discusses values and principles that should be included in health care policy at the July commission meeting in Oskaloosa.*

role as the lead in coordinating data and research to assist the commission.

The commission has scheduled seven meetings, one meeting every month through December, across the state and plans to hold three public hearings in September hosted by former Governors Tom Vilsack and Terry Branstad.

## Affordability, access and quality discussed

The first meeting of the commission was held on June 20 and consisted mostly of introductions and other organizational activities. The second meeting was held at William Penn College in Oskaloosa, July 18. A facilitator from the National Council of State Legislators is being used to help the group more efficiently navigate this immense issue. The facilitator put the commission members through exercises designed to identify priorities.

The key areas discussed by the commission relate to affordability, access and quality. Commission members discussed a range of broad issues including, who the uninsured are and who

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# Barn Raising conference videos available soon

By Bob Kerksieck\*

If you missed the thunderous applause to Governor Chet Culver's reference to the \$1 tobacco tax increase, don't despair. If you weren't there to see CDC Director Dr. Julie Gerberding field as many as 10 impromptu questions from health professionals and community leaders, have no fear. Or perhaps you only saw one of Dr. Martin Collis' inspirational presentations for health workers. Well, you're in luck. These presentations and many more from Barn Raising VI will soon be available as archived video files on [www.thehealthconference.org](http://www.thehealthconference.org).

A record-breaking crowd of nearly 900 participants attended the Aug. 2 & 3 Governor's Conference on Public Health at Drake University. Since no one could possibly have seen all the presentations, the Barn Raising Workgroup made it a point to record as many presentations as possible this year. Up to 14 will be available by Aug. 31. Others will be posted later.

## Governor Culver highlights advancements

Governor Culver spoke with great passion about how public health priorities passed by the 2007 legislature show Iowa is actively engaged in im-

proving the quality of life, and how public health issues are central to his vision of "One Iowa." The governor received a warm welcome from the participants as he cited many examples of public health legislation that he signed into law this year including the tobacco tax, dental screenings, lead testing, beer keg registration and stem cell research.

## CDC director cites "extreme" conditions

Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the nation's leading health protection agency, pointed out how public health is responding to the many extreme conditions in today's world, including extreme aging, extreme climate change, domestic extremes and extreme diet. She also introduced the extensive preparations the CDC and public sector are making for a possible avian flu pandemic.

## Relax to restore equilibrium, says Collis

Dr. Martin Collis gave the both the keynote and wrap-up presentations on the second day of the conference and received standing ovations from the participants for each of his inspiring talks. Collis used music and humor to



**IDPH Director Tom Newton appears with Cheri Blauwet at the Barn Raising reception. Blauwet, a Paralympic gold medalist from Iowa, spoke at the conference and was featured in "Healthy Communities," a magazine produced especially for Barn Raising.**

provide insights into how the mind and body respond to stress, and how the relaxation response can restore equilibrium. Collis, originally from the U.K. and a resident of British Columbia, is an authority on worksite wellness and high-level personal and professional performance.

## Actual barn raising video featured

A video of the raising of the historic Herrick Barn by the Newark Valley Historical Society in New York was used to introduce the conference during registration and breakfast both days. Historically, barn raisers from a community including

neighbors, family and friends, would gather to raise a barn in a much shorter period of time than could be done by only a few. Working together helped these builders see themselves as a community with shared values.

To see what you can do in your own community or to relive the Barn Raising conference experience, look for an announcement soon about the posting of video files to [www.thehealthconference.org](http://www.thehealthconference.org).

\* Bob Kerksieck is a health facilities surveyor at IDPH.



**Iowa Department of Public Health**

**Advancing Health Through the Generations**

# Bus tour emphasizes importance of prevention to seniors

By Jaci Miller\*

Prevention is key to living a healthier life, and the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#) (CMS) Prevention Bus Tour is helping show how a healthier U.S. must begin with that core belief. Dubbed "A Healthier US Starts Here," the bus tour began in the spring of 2007. By the end of August, the tour will have visited each of the 48 contiguous states to encourage seniors to manage their chronic diseases and get preventive screenings.

On July 10 it was Iowa's turn.

The tour's first stop in Iowa was at the Northwest Senior Center in Des Moines. Federal and state dignitaries visited with area seniors and those participating in the [Iowa Healthy Links Program](#) and the "Partners in Prevention" exhibit event.

## Federal and state dignitaries among attendees

"We were excited to have over 100 people participate in the event," said Carlene Russell, nutritionist at the [Iowa Department of Elder Affairs](#). "The bus tour highlighted the benefits of preventive health care in keeping older adults healthier and more independent."

Iowans were given the opportunity to speak with [Health and Human Services](#) (DHHS) Regional Director, Fred

Schuster; [Health Resources and Services Administration](#) Deputy Administrator, Dennis Williams; Lt. Governor Patty Judge; representatives from the offices of Tom Harkin and Chuck Grassley; State Senator Jack Hatch; and State Rep-

past. It was great for people to see us working together to improve the lives of older Iowans."

Lt. Governor Patty Judge read a proclamation from the Governor which stressed the importance of wellness efforts for Iowa seniors.



*The CMS bus is welcomed to Des Moines by federal and state dignitaries. By the end of August, the tour will have visited each of the 48 contiguous states.*

representatives Ako Abdul-Samad, Linda Upmeyer and Ro Foege. They discussed the importance of local programs to assist seniors and raised awareness about prevention screenings and management of chronic diseases.

"The bus tour was an excellent experience for us to showcase what we are doing in Iowa," said Donna Harvey, Executive Director of the [Hawkeye Valley Area Agency on Aging](#). "It was important for us to identify, along with DHHS, that preventive care is the best approach versus treatment, which we tended to look toward in the

## Public health an important partner

Public health was represented well during the tour by staff from the Iowa Department of Public Health and the local departments of Black Hawk, Linn and Polk Counties, in which a number of projects are being carried out for older Iowans.

One such project is the Chronic Disease Self Management Program. The project is part of an \$850,000, three-year federal grant initiative

funded by the [U.S. Administration on Aging](#). An important part of the project is conducting workshops designed for older Iowans with chronic diseases, such as arthritis, heart disease, stroke, asthma, lung disease, diabetes and osteoporosis.

*\* Jaci Miller is a Region 2 community health consultant.*



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# 2006 Vital Statistics of Iowa in Brief released

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has just released the [2006 Vital Statistics of Iowa in Brief](#). Among the data included in this “pocket guide to the health status of Iowans” is provisional data on the number of live births and top the 10 causes of death in the state and individual counties in 2006. The full report should appear in late 2007.

The brief can be accessed and printed from the IDPH homepage under “Birth, Death and Marriage Certificates” in the “Quick Links” section. Hard copies will be available in the coming months. Briefs and full reports from previous years are also available online.

For more information, contact Josh Jungling in the IDPH Bureau of Health Statistics at [jjunglin@idph.state.ia.us](mailto:jjunglin@idph.state.ia.us) or call (515) 281-4945.



## Unique solutions offered by communities

*Continued from page 1*

across the state, there are just as many, if not more issues that are specific to each particular population. These meetings will prove useful in helping to develop policy initiatives regarding health and wellness for next year's legislative session."

Following the meetings, commissioners are scheduled to come together to review the notes from each of the meetings. They will then identify common themes and priorities for future work.

### Forum showcases unique solutions from communities

Hundreds of issues regarding health and wellness were addressed at the meetings held in senior centers, libraries, and community buildings. Some recurring themes included: community access to health care; financial issues; issues with providers; community barriers to wellness, including transportation and lack of education; and ways community leaders can take action to address these issues.

Jane Schadle of the IDPH Office for Healthy Communities also attended the meetings and has been encouraged by some of the ideas she's heard. "People in these communities may

have solutions we've never dreamed of," Schadle said. "We look forward to blending what we are hearing from the communities with what is possible for the legislature to do."

After the final meetings have been concluded this month, commissioners will use the input from communities to identify and develop possible solutions to major health issues in Iowa.

Schadle admits that funding will be an important part of designing solutions. The upside, she says, is that some communities have funds not tied directly to programming, which may give them the freedom for the development of plans specific to certain areas. "This could be a beginning for all of us to build a culture of health in Iowa, and we have a whole state full of rich assets upon which to begin," Schadle added.

For more information, contact Jane Schadle at (515) 281-0917 or [jschadle@idph.state.ia.us](mailto:jschadle@idph.state.ia.us).

*\* Jessica Torneten is a community and public health student at Iowa State University and the editor of this issue of Iowa Health Focus.*



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## Suicide prevention awareness focus of Sept. 23 event

On Sunday, Sept. 23 the [Iowa Department of Public Health](#) will co-sponsor the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#) (AFSP) "Out of the Darkness Community Walks." The walk will be held at the peninsula area of Gray's Lake in Des Moines, 2:00-5:00 p.m. This two-mile scenic walk is a journey of hope — to heal the losses of the past and help prevent suicide from taking more lives.

Last year, the Iowa walk was held in Ames with 200 walkers and raised over \$18,000 for suicide prevention efforts.

This year, thousands of people will participate in community walks across the country. Proceeds will benefit AFSP's vital research and education programs to prevent suicide and save lives, increase national awareness about depression and suicide, and assist survivors of suicide loss.

For more information about the walk or to register, visit [www.outofthedarkness.org](http://www.outofthedarkness.org) or call 1-888-333-AFSP. For information about the walk in Iowa, contact Stephanie McAdam at (515) 225-6585.



*Last year, participants released balloons attached with messages to loved ones lost or words of encouragement to survivors.*

## Health care reform not just about coverage

*Continued from page 2*

should be covered, how to pay for health care reform and contain costs, what services should be covered, what role preventive programs plays in health care reform, and how to help small businesses pay for health insurance coverage for employees. The next meeting of the commission on Aug. 15 will continue these exercises to better refine the priorities.

"Health care reform is not just about health coverage," Newton pointed out. "Take the case of chronic

diseases, such as diabetes and high blood pressure, which account for three out of every four dollars spent on health care in the U.S. Many believe that aggressive disease management via doctor's offices and other modes could greatly reduce these costs."

Although Iowa was recently ranked by The Commonwealth Fund as second in the nation for health care access, quality, avoidable costs, equity and healthy lives, Newton says that it doesn't mean that the health

care needs of Iowans are being met. Rather, it means that Iowa is fortunate to have a good base to improve upon.

For more information about the commission, including meetings times, locations, agendas and handouts, the commission Web page can be accessed from the General Assembly's Web site at [www.legis.state.ia.us](http://www.legis.state.ia.us).

*\* Lynh Patterson is the legislative liaison for IDPH.*



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# Tobacco tax impacts adult tobacco use

## Calls to Quitline Iowa triple in last four months

By Maggie O'Rourke\*

Four months ago the state excise tax on a package of cigarettes was raised by \$1.00 to a total of \$1.36. The bill was signed into law by Governor Chet Culver on March 16. In that brief time, phone calls to the state's telephone counseling helpline, [Quitline Iowa](#), have tripled according to recent data.

Since the tobacco tax went into effect, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) [Division of Tobacco Use Prevention and Control](#) (TUPC) staff have also seen an increase in telephone calls and emails requesting community-specific resources and help with kicking the habit. In addition, tobacco division contractors have reported an increase in phone calls and requests from the public.

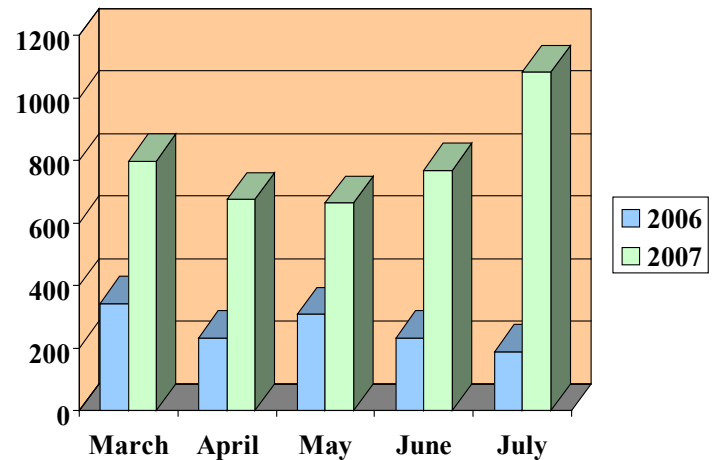
"The number of additional Iowa adult smokers expected to quit because of the \$1.00 tax increase is more than 20,000," said Bonnie

Mapes, division director of TUPC.

"And, we are looking forward to seeing how many Iowans have actually quit smoking." Mapes added that this figure will be determined through the 2008 Iowa Adult Tobacco Use survey."

In the past five years, some 30 states have passed increases in their tobacco excise tax and all have had similar experiences. Quitline Iowa provides free, telephone-based tobacco use cessation counseling for all Iowa tobacco users. Since the tobacco tax was increased, call volume to Quitline Iowa has tripled compared to the same period last year. This includes incoming calls and the number of follow-up counseling calls provided by Quitline counselors.

Quitline Iowa contacts clients six months after they have completed their counseling to confirm whether they have quit and remained that way. According to Quitline Iowa staff, the total number of incoming calls received through July 31 was 1,084.



**Since the tobacco tax went into effect, calls to the Quitline Iowa have increased dramatically from the same time last year.**

"That's three times as many new callers compared to the same period last year," says Esther Baker, program coordinator of Quitline Iowa at the [Iowa Tobacco Research Center](#). "Many callers are telling our counselors that the cost of smoking is one of their main reasons for wanting to quit."

To ensure that people who are motivated to quit by the tobacco tax increase are aware of the free services offered by Quitline Iowa, the division has used supplemental funding allocated by the Iowa Legislature to increase promotion of

Quitline Iowa throughout the state. Additional funds have also been used to increase the number of Quitline counselors in order to serve the greatly increased number of people seeking help in quitting.

*\* Maggie O'Rourke is a community health consultant at IDPH.*



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# Iowa food safety professional to represent U.S. in international program

By Michele Appelgate and Carmily Stone\*

Dixie Fullerton, environmental health specialist with the [Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health](#), recently received the [National Environmental Health Association](#) (NEHA) Sabbatical Exchange Ambassador Award. NEHA Executive Director Nelson Fabian presented Fullerton with the award in June at the association's annual conference in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

As a recipient, Fullerton, a certified food safety professional, will participate in a three-week exchange in October to England and Scotland. "This is something I have always wanted to do and am honored," said Fullerton. "This is an opportunity of a lifetime."

Ken Sharp, interim director of the [Division of Environmental Health](#) at the Iowa Department of Public Health, points out how unique this opportunity really is. "Dixie is the only person in the nation to receive this award this year," Sharp said. "She will be representing NEHA which consists of approximately 5,000 members from all over the world. We are excited about this opportunity for Dixie, and we're looking forward to hearing about her experience when she returns."

During the Sabbatical Exchange, Fullerton's main focus will be on food safety and food education programs. She will have the opportunity to observe, learn, and share environmental public health experiences with recipients from other countries.

Fullerton not only views this as a great opportunity for herself, but for her col-

leagues as well. "The information I will gather is valuable for building partnerships and friendships internationally," Fullerton said. "It will be interesting to see how things are set up and the differences in rules and regulations. I will then be able to share the information with not only our staff, but also with the state of Iowa."

Fullerton is the first Iowan chosen for this opportunity. In return, Cerro Gordo County is also able to host someone involved in the exchange program. Fullerton

felt that it was important that Cerro Gordo County act as a host because of the wide variety of observable environmental factors there, including food handling, septic activities, wells, tanning, and lead poisoning.

"We must learn together how to identify, plan, and resolve environmental issues and concerns," Fullerton said. "I am so proud to represent not only Cerro Gordo County, but also

the [Iowa Environmental Health Association](#) and the NEHA."

The exchange is sponsored by the NEHA, [Chartered Institute of Environmental Health](#), the [Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors](#) and [Underwriters Laboratory](#). Travel expenses will also be covered by the sponsors.

\* Michele Appelgate is a public information officer at the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health. Carmily Stone is the Environmental Health Specialist Network coordinator at IDPH.



**Dixie Fullerton, environmental health specialist with the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health, performs a food safety inspection at a local restaurant.**



# Iowa celebrates 100 years of nursing

By Jessica Torneten\*

Superior care provided by qualified individuals is something often taken for granted these days; however, that was not the case 100 years ago. It wasn't until 1907 that the Iowa Legislature took the first steps in ensuring that individuals providing nursing care were qualified to do so under state law.

This year, the **Iowa Board of Nursing (IBN)** is celebrating its centennial. Last month, Governor Chet Culver declared July 4, 2007, the anniversary of the original licensing law, a day to mark this occasion.

## First exam administered in 1908

IBN Executive Director Lorinda Inman says that before the Nurse Practice Act of 1907, educational standards were set by hospitals. "The board was initially created to regulate education and design and administer testing," Inman said. "Duties now include continued competency and the evaluation of programs, but the IBN also evaluates any complaints and takes necessary disciplinary actions."

The Nurse Practice Act was created to separate qualified individuals from people ill-equipped to provide nursing care. The first board, which consisted of five members, designed an examination which covered areas deemed essential to providing appropriate care.

The first nursing licenses were granted by waiver to 695 individuals based on previous experience or education. The



*Qualified nurses, like the one pictured here, have provided care to Iowans since 1907.*

first exam, administered in 1908, was composed of 50 essay questions divided into five sections, with 10 questions to be completed orally. All seven applicants passed this first exam.

## Exam evolves, core mission remains

Over the years the exam has undergone significant changes. Today the exam is standardized and administered via computer allowing it to

be taken at the applicant's convenience instead of at set times throughout the year.

"In addition to testing, the work has also changed dramatically over the years, but the responsibilities are very similar," said Inman. "We still have the same goal, and that is to see that quality nursing care is provided to all citizens of Iowa."

Currently, there are 52,784 licensed nurses in Iowa, with 3,953 new nurses approved last year, making nursing Iowa's largest health care profession. Inman said that one of the great things about nursing in Iowa is that there is a collegial relationship among the board, nurses, nursing associations, and nursing educators, allowing everyone to work closely together on nursing and health care issues.

*\* Jessica Torneten is a community and public health student at Iowa State University and the editor of this issue of Iowa Health Focus.*



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## IDPH



## Bureau of Disease Prevention and Immunization

Recently, *Focus* spoke with Jim Goodrich, chief of the **Bureau of Disease Prevention and Immunization**.

### What is the mission of your bureau?

Our mission is to eliminate transmission, illness and death from viral hepatitis, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis, and vaccine preventable diseases. We do this through prevention programming, disease surveillance, early intervention, access to testing, immunizations and treatment.

### What programs and services does the bureau provide to accomplish this mission?

Our bureau is unique because we are one of the few in the department that provide direct services. When I say "we," I mean our field staff, who are located in six county health departments. They counsel and educate those affected, and encourage risk reduction activities. They also identify all sex and/or needle sharing partners, locate them, and test them for disease.

### What if a test comes back positive?

In order for everyone in need of assistance to receive proper treatment, we follow a standard procedure for

each infection. The case is recorded, treatment is verified by providers, and field staff are sent to address the individuals regarding needed disease prevention education and to elicit the names of partners also in need of services.

### It sounds like your field staff play an important role.

Yes they do, unfortunately over the past few years we have received cuts in our federal funding resulting in a loss of three field staff positions. This limits services provided for lowans and makes access to treatment and care more difficult in many communities.

### How do you manage a bureau of more than 30 staff members?

I am fortunate to have experienced, knowledgeable staff in the bureau. At least one person from each program has received national recognition for their work. In fact, three of our programs have been asked to present at their respective national conferences. They truly know their jobs and do them well.

### What notable successes has your bureau achieved recently?

Recently, the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) ended their waiting list making AIDS drugs immediately available to lowans who register and qualify for ADAP. This is a significant accomplishment considering as many as 77 people were waiting to access the program in April 2005. Also, during this year's immunization assessments we found that 95 percent of children served by Iowa's public health clinics had received full vaccinations by two years of age. This exceeds the national goal of 90 percent, and is up from our 1993 mark of 50 percent.

### Your bureau really seems to be making a difference in the lives of lowans.

Yes, providing direct services like childhood

immunization for example, allows us to prevent the contraction and spread of serious diseases like measles, mumps, rubella and hepatitis B.

### What is coming up for your bureau?

We are very excited about co-sponsoring a statewide HIV conference in June 2008 with the Iowa Department of Education and the HIV Community Planning Group. We will cover topics such as HIV/STD/Hepatitis prevention and care issues, effective strategies and interventions to help change behaviors that increase the risk for contracting communicable diseases, identifying current care and treatment options, and much more. We are anticipating approximately 400 participants.



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# Jones County playgrounds get a safety makeover

By Sharon Ferguson\*

Children playing on playgrounds in Jones County will be safer thanks to funds from the [Jones County Empowerment Board](#). Following a recent injury prevention assessment, Child Care Nurse Consultant (CCNC), Teri Keleher passed along important information to the park board about a public playground used by preschool students.

"This playground is used by a number of children, often without supervision," Keleher said. "Improving playground safety will help reduce the number of injuries and deaths associated with inadequate equipment and effective 'fall surfacing,' such as pea gravel, sand or wood chips."

In Iowa, the CCNC's responsibility is to provide health and safety education to licensed child care centers and providers. Community leaders responsible

for maintaining these playgrounds now have an increased knowledge of the importance of adequate fall surfacing below playground equipment, and its role in preventing and reducing injuries.

St. Patrick Parochial School in Anamosa requested an injury prevention check by Keleher in November of 2006. While examining the playground, they discovered many safety hazards. Not only was the fall surfacing inadequate, but there were also open S hooks on the chains of swings. Keleher immediately contacted the park and board director with concerns, and within a few days the issues were addressed.

"After being notified by the CCNC, I contacted our playground equipment supplier and purchased S hook pliers. We also replaced worn out equipment and added more fall surfacing to areas needed," said Warren Spurgeon, Parks and Recreation director. "We now inspect equipment monthly for maintenance needs and encourage

citizens to report any problems with public playgrounds."

A playground safety class was offered with curriculum from the National Program for Playground Safety to child care providers and licensed child care staff free of charge. Four \$100 door prizes were also given away to help purchase fall surfacing for participating businesses.

Rebecca Kremer, a registered provider, is in the process of building a playground. "I didn't know there were so many things to learn about building a safe environment for children to play on," Kremer said. "I am glad I took the time to learn and will be sure to build the proper way."

Keleher also spoke with the [Monticello City Parks and Recreation](#) Board and took along playground equipment catalogs and the Handbook for Public Playground Safety. The city of Monticello is working with the public schools and the Monticello Parent-Teacher Organization in purchasing equipment appropriate for different age levels. They are combining fiscal resources in replacing and buying new equipment for the two elementary schools.

To learn more about playground safety, visit [www.playgroundsefety.org](http://www.playgroundsefety.org).

\* Sharon Ferguson is a Region 5 child care nurse consultant.



*Tilted merry-go-rounds like the one above are one of several safety hazards CCNCs must look for.*



Iowa Department of Public Health

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# Task force to promote handwashing in September

By Ann Garvey\*

What are the 10 dirtiest utensils in a food preparation area? Your fingers! And Iowans in Washington County are taking this issue seriously. After participating in a food safety training course taught by Jennine Wolf, [Washington County Public Health](#) Inspector, the [Iowa Cattlemen's Association](#) in Washington County invested in their own portable handwashing sink to use at the countywide events in which they participate.

"We have a good following of people and wanted to spend the money to ensure safer foods, so the handwashing sink made sense, said Jan Dallmeyer of the Washington County Cattlemen's Association. "You know the old saying 'you don't know how important something is until you lose it'? Getting the hand sink was the opposite. We had no idea what we were missing out on. The sink makes everything so much easier."

There are many other groups in Iowa speaking out loudly on this issue as well, including the [Iowa Food Safety Task Force](#). The Task Force, is led by the [Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals](#). Partners include: the Iowa Department of Public Health;

other state, local, regional and federal agencies; private

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## National Food Safety Education Month®

National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation

sector associations that work with consumers; regulators; and food workers.

Spreading the handwashing message has become a core mission for this group, which has developed educational materials for a public education handwashing campaign this fall. Educators will emphasize the importance of food safety in restaurants and homes to prevent foodborne illness during [National Food Safety Month](#) in September.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) estimates that there are approximately 76 million cases of foodborne illnesses each year, an estimated 67 percent of which come from human fecal viruses such as norovirus. Handwashing is a critical point for food handlers all along the food chain.

"Handwashing is one thing that people can do to help public health and ensure safer

foods," said Sam Beattie, food safety inspection specialist at [Iowa State University](#). "The fact that fecal-derived norovirus is the leading cause of foodborne illness in the U.S. shows that we do not value such a simple yet critical act."

People are encouraged to use materials from the fall handwashing education campaign in their National Food Safety Month activities. Materials, including visual presentations, are available the Iowa State University Food Safety Project Web site at [www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsafety](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsafety).

*\* Ann Garvey is the state public health veterinarian for Iowa.*



**Advancing Health Through the Generations**

# World Rabies Day encourages education about impact on global health

By Don McCormick\*

Human cases of rabies are rare in Iowa and the rest of the United States. However, according to the [Alliance for Rabies Control](#), rabies accounts for at least 55,000 deaths worldwide each year. Approximately 100 children die of rabies every day. These numbers are startling considering most cases could be prevented with proper medical treatment.

In recognition of the significant impact rabies has on global health, Sept. 8 has been declared [World Rabies Day](#).

"Rabies is a concern for the human health, animal health and public health communities, and we all need to promote education within our respective fields," said State Public Health Veterinarian Ann Garvey. "World Rabies Day provides a great opportunity to discuss this important disease with our constituents."

Iowa's last human case of rabies occurred in 2002. Prior to that, the last case was in 1951.

Iowa does, however, experience a significant number of animal rabies cases each year, Garvey says. In 2006, there were 57 confirmed cases of rabies in Iowa. These cases included 28 bats, 13 skunks, seven cats, four cattle, three horses, and two dogs.

Local public health departments, local boards of health, the Iowa Department of Public Health, and the [Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship](#) spend a significant amount of time responding to rabies-related inquiries from veterinary and human health providers and the public.

The IDPH [Epidemiology Manual](#) contains recommendations for responding to potential rabies exposures. In addition, public health professionals also often refer to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#), "Human Rabies Prevention - 1999: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices" and the [2007 Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control](#) compiled by the [National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians](#).

"I hope people observe World Rabies Day by educating themselves and others on this significant public health issue," Garvey said. "Rabies will continue to present challenges for both the public and animal health communities for many years to come."

For more information on World Rabies Day, visit [www.worldrabiesday.org](http://www.worldrabiesday.org).



# Iowa Citizens' Summit on Childhood Obesity, Aug. 25

Shaping America's Youth (SAY) in conjunction with [Iowans Fit for Life](#) and the Partnership for Better Health is holding an important event in our nation's effort to respond to the weight crisis facing America's youth.

The [Iowa Citizens' Summit on Childhood Obesity](#), directed by [AmericaSpeaks](#), will be held at the Polk County Convention Complex in Des Moines on Saturday, Aug. 25 from 9:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Five hundred citizens from across the state will gather to discuss how individuals influencing different spheres of our children's lives can take action to improve childhood nutrition and increase physical activity. Local leaders will use the feedback to raise awareness and create the momentum necessary for action on the issue.

The Iowa meeting will be the fifth meeting held across the U.S. that seeks grassroots community input into the development of a community-based plan of action. Beginning last year, the first four meetings were held in Memphis, Dallas, Philadelphia and Chicago. Hundreds of local citizens and dignitaries convened to provide input and direction on resolving this national health crisis.



Recommendations from the national part of the discussion will be used to develop a National Action Plan. This plan will also incorporate feedback collected at other SAY town meetings. When complete, the plan will introduce recommendations that will be used by families, schools, communities, health care providers, and decision-makers in Washington and across the country.

To learn more about the Citizens' Summit and to register for the event, visit <http://meetings.shapingamericasyouth.org>.



# IDPH promotes healthy communities at State Fair

This year, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) is again participating in the Iowa State Fair, August 9-19, by setting up a booth in the Varied Industries Building. During the 11-day event, IDPH is sharing health messages with over one million fair-goers on topics such as improving access to health services, injury prevention, preparation for and response to public health emergencies and disasters, promotion of healthy behaviors, and protection against environmental hazards.

The IDPH booth features the ever-popular "Walking the Fair" scavenger hunt. Not only does the activity promote physical activity, but participants also draw for various prizes, and register to win a grand prize. Prizes are donated by various government, business, and private organizations across the state. Divisions and bureaus within IDPH have also donated items that promote the department's many health messages.

To learn more about the IDPH state fair booth, look under the "Topics of Interest" section of the IDPH homepage at

[www.idph.state.ia.us](http://www.idph.state.ia.us).



**Iowa Department of Public Health**

**Advancing Health Through the Generations**



# Open call for abstracts: 2008 Iowa Public Health Conference

The 2008 Iowa Public Health Conference is approaching, and conference partners are announcing their open call for abstracts. Consider this opportunity to be a part of this premier Iowa Public Health Conference held April 1 & 2.

This general call for abstracts is open to the public, and conference partnering organizations will also specifically encourage or solicit abstracts for submission. Approximately 50 percent of the concurrent sessions will be selected using the open call for abstract process.

The deadline for submitting an abstract is Sept. 14, 2007. Notification of acceptance will occur by Nov. 1. For a complete list of guidelines, contact Sara Patkin at (515) 963-8664 or [m spatkin@yahoo.com](mailto:m spatkin@yahoo.com). Abstract proposals can be submitted online at [www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qE0oYz0kXRr\\_2btwfdhsYnJw\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qE0oYz0kXRr_2btwfdhsYnJw_3d_3d).



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## Conference to save lives of Iowa's children, Nov. 16

The first Child Death Investigation and Prevention Conference will take place on Nov. 16. This full day event, held at the Iowa Health Education and Research Center in Des Moines, could help save the lives of dozens of Iowa children. Continuing education credits (CEUs, CMEs and CEHs) will be offered.

Watch for more information, including

registration details and a meeting agenda, at [www.blankchildrens.org](http://www.blankchildrens.org).

To learn how the [Iowa Child Death Review Team](#) is working within the medical, health, legal and public safety fields to prevent needless deaths among Iowa children, visit [www.idph.state.ia.us/hpcdp/medical\\_examiner\\_cdrt.asp](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/hpcdp/medical_examiner_cdrt.asp).

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